United Nations A/63/497–S/2008/668

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
22 October 2008

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-third session
Agenda items 13, 18, 47, 53, 64 and 79

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Macroeconomic policy questions

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Promotion and protection of human rights

The rule of law at the national and international levels

Letter dated 20 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the "Final statement and recommendations of the ninth meeting of the European Union-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee" (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 13, 18, 47, 53, 64 and 79, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Agshin **Mehdiyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

08-56483 (E) 241008

Annex to the letter dated 20 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

European Union-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

Ninth meeting
6-7 October 2008
Brussels

Final statement and recommendations
Pursuant to article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN (Greens/EFA, France) and Mr Valeh ALESKEROV, Deputy Speaker of the Milli Mejlis, the ninth meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Brussels on 6-7 October 2008. The Committee exchanged views with Mrs Sevindj HASANOVA, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and H.E. Mahmud MAMED-KULIYEV, Ambassador and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mrs Natasha BUTLER, on behalf of the French Presidency-in-Office of the European Union and Mr Giuseppe BUSINI, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

State of play of the EU-Azerbaijan relations

1. reiterates its strongly-held view that the people of Azerbaijan share a common destiny with other peoples of Europe, and that closer relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union, including further mutual enrichment of values, are in the common interest of both partners, requiring adoption, implementation and promotion of the commonly-shared values of democracy and respect for human rights all over Europe; in this regard, calls both parties to take all necessary measures towards harmonisation of legislation to create necessary conditions for and enrich future partnership and cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union;

2. underlines the fundamental importance of a timely and complete implementation of the ENP Action Plan jointly adopted by the EU and Azerbaijan in November 2006;

3. notes that bringing Azerbaijan and the other two South Caucasus countries closer to the EU should be aimed at promoting stability and prosperity among the democratic states of the region;

4. takes into account the resolution 1614 on "the functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan" adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 June 2008 and urges the Azerbaijani authorities to address all issues raised in this document;

5. expresses its concern regarding the latest developments in the South Caucasus region, particularly

in Georgia, stresses the interrelatedness of a number of problems in this region and the need for a solution in the form of a stability pact, with the involvement of the major external actors, underlines the need to enhance cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the Black Sea region; stresses its concern regarding the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus, reiterates its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and calls for increased efforts towards a peaceful settlement of these regional conflicts, taking into account these principles;

6. emphasizes the key geographical position and strategic importance of Azerbaijan, which stands as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of developing Trans-Caspian links with Central Asian countries; welcomes Azerbaijan's active cooperation in the European Commission's feasibility study regarding a Trans-Caspian Sea/Black Sea energy corridor, through the "Baku initiative", thus substantially contributing to strategic oil and gas pipeline projects, including the "Nabucco" gas pipeline and other strategic pipelines, linking the Caspian region and Central Asia with Europe;

7. realising that close partnership with the EU in the field of education, science, research and training is difficult to accomplish without promoting people-to-people contacts, urges both the European Commission and the Government of Azerbaijan to launch the EU-Azerbaijan dialogue on visas as soon as possible in accordance with the relevant provision of the EU-Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan;

8. welcomes the opening of the Delegation of the European Commission in Baku in February 2008 which has already increased effectiveness and strengthened coordination of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership, takes note of the fact that the Delegation staffing will be completed by the end of 2008;

9. welcomes the fact that Azerbaijan was recognized as the top reformer in 2007/08 in implementing business regulatory reforms and as one of the leading countries with investment-friendly economies in the joint report of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation "Doing business 2009", also acknowledges the efforts made by the Government of Azerbaijan in the social sector, mainly in poverty reduction, and encourages the Government to continue its efforts in this direction;

10. takes note of the adoption of the State Programme for Poverty Reduction, adopted by the Azerbaijani Government on 15 September 2008, providing for thorough social reforms, tackling unemployment and establishment of a minimum wage;

Respect for human rights and the rule of law

11. calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to fully implement their clear commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and media; welcomes the adoption by the Azerbaijani Parliament in May 2008 of the amendments to the law on freedom of assembly, which has been a source of concern, as illustrated by the provisions of the ENP Action Plan, the PCA and the relevant obligations contracted by the country upon the accession to the OSCE and the Council of Europe;

12. looks forward to effective implementation of the European Commission -- Council of Europe Joint Programme on the penitentiary reform in Azerbaijan; notes the adoption by the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan statute on changes and addenda to Penalty Implementation Code and Criminal Process Code, takes note of the efforts made by Azerbaijan to reform the penitentiary system, in particular to improve the conditions of detention through renovation works and trainings for the prison administration and staff; calls upon the authorities to continue and intensify measures regarding the conditions of prisoners of conscience and prisoners on long-term or life sentences;

13. calls on the Azerbaijani government to continue thoroughly investigating alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment incurred to prisoners by representatives of Azerbaijani law-enforcement agents during pre-trial detention period; in order to allow sanctions to applied to those responsible for such violent act;

14. while acknowledging the tolerance traditionally inherent in the Azerbaijani society, calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to improve the legislative and institutional framework regarding the protection of national minorities;

15. urges the Azerbaijani authorities to make sure that violence and threats of violence against journalists are properly investigated and that perpetrators are punished according to the law; calls on the Azerbaijani officials to refrain from filing defamation charges against journalists, in order to respect freedom of the media in the country;

16. while acknowledging the efforts that have been made in improving the selection and training of judges and noting that wages have been significantly increased, further concrete measures are necessary in order to ensure the real continuing reform of the judiciary;

17. draws the attention of the Azerbaijani authorities to the reported allegations of dubiously motivated criminal prosecutions and disproportionate sentences; call on the Executive power to reframe from interfering into the work of the judiciary, thus insuring its independence and professionalism;

The conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan

18. calls for increased efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and the entire international community towards settlement of the conflict on the basis of full respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognised borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan and of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities;

19. regrets that efforts to bring the three countries of the region closer together are hampered by the persistence of armed conflicts caused by territorial claims and separatism; takes note of allegations that conflict zones are often used as safe heavens for organised crime, money laundering, illicit drug trafficking and smuggling of weapons;

20. welcomes the achievement in increased cooperation and a unified approach in efforts of the European Union and the United States towards peaceful solutions of unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, which would assure these states' territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders;

21. stresses its concern regarding the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus, welcomes further the support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and efforts towards a peaceful settlement of these conflicts taking into account these and other relevant principals of international law, as expressed in the Bucarest Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantik Council in Bucarest on 3 April 2008;

22. takes note of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution "on the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", adopted on 14 March 2008, which expresses serious concern that the armed conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan continues to endanger international peace and security, reaffirms Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, expresses support for its internationally recognised borders and demands the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories;

23. deplores that the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, victims of the ethnic cleansing in the early 1990's, are still deprived of their rights to return safely and in dignity to their homes; calls, in this regard, withdrawal of Armenia's forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh and return of displaced populations to their homes;

24. stresses that reconciliation between the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples is essential for the stability and prosperity of the South Caucasus region; calls for their constructive cooperation based on goodwill, modern thinking and the opportunities offered by the ENP, from which all could benefit;

25. calls on all EU institutions and on the Azerbaijani authorities to redouble their efforts and to intensify their cooperation in order to ensure a greater EU contribution in achieving a sustainable solution to the conflict;

Regional and international cooperation

26. expresses its concern regarding the latest developments in the South Caucasus region, particularly in Georgia and calls for increased efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the regional conflicts;

27. under the circumstances, welcomes the important role that Azerbaijan is playing within the framework of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, in particular as far as the security of energy sources and production is concerned;

28. strongly supports the ongoing efforts made by Azerbaijan in the framework of the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) for enhancing regional cooperation and multilateral relations;

29. recalls that the ENP Action Plans highlight the importance of the Regional Environment Centre for the South Caucasus; calls upon the European Commission to pursue its financial support to this regional cooperation structure, calls upon Azerbaijan to consider its financial support to this structure of the three countries of the South Caucasus.